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BACK BAY ARCHITECTURAL DISTRICT

Business Sector Guidelines

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**GUIDELINES FOR EXTERIOR DESIGN:
BUSINESS SECTOR – NEWBURY STREET, BOYLSTON
STREET, AND MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE.**

The Back Bay Residential District, established under Chapter 625, Acts of 1966, was enlarged by Chapter 463, Acts of 1974 (effective August 3, 1974), to include Newbury and Boylston Streets from Dartmouth Street to Massachusetts Avenue, with the intervening connecting streets, and its name was changed to Back Bay Architectural District.

All plans for demolition or new construction or for exterior alteration or repair of existing buildings, as well as all proposals concerning the erection of signs, awnings, and other features appurtenant to structures in the Architectural District, must be submitted to the Back Bay Architectural Commission for review and approval.

These guidelines, a supplement to those for the Back Bay Residential District, apply to the special needs of businesses for changes to existing structures in the business zone – Newbury Street, Boylston Street, and Massachusetts Avenue. They are intended to clarify the criteria which will guide the Back Bay Architectural Commission in the decisions it is required by the above-cited laws to make. The Commission will consider such issues as: the architectural and historical significance of buildings; the mass, height, scale, fenestration, and color of buildings and blocks of buildings; the treatment of yards and entranceways; and the size, location, and color of signs.

All changes must conform to zoning code, sign code, and building code regulations. Approvals granted by the Commission do not constitute approval of any required variances to the zoning code or other regulations.

BUILDINGS





Facade Changes

Not generally allowed except as specified in these guidelines. The covering or removal of original facade elements (columns, pilasters, fenestration, arches, lintels, decorative elements) is generally discouraged except as discussed elsewhere in these guidelines.

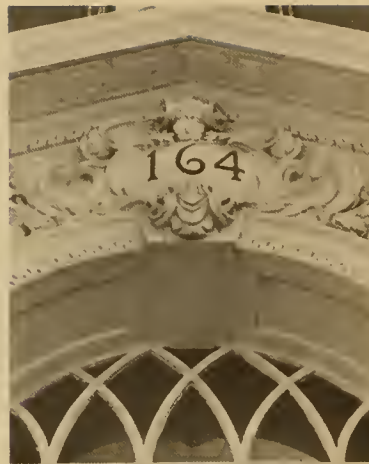
Extensions into Front and Side Yards

Not generally allowed.

Demolition

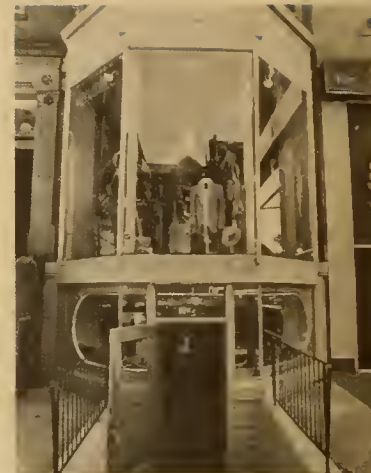
NEWBURY STREET: not generally allowed.

BOYLSTON STREET: allowed only if it is clearly demonstrated that any replacement is justifiable architecturally and economically as well as in its urban design impact on the street. (The objective is to prevent the appearance of open lots within the District.) Demolition when approved will generally be allowed only after all permits for the replacement structure(s) have been obtained and satisfactory assurance has been given that new construction will follow immediately.



Street Numbers

Required at entrance for each building address. Numbers should be easily visible and legible from the street both day and night. A vertical typeface without attached background is encouraged.

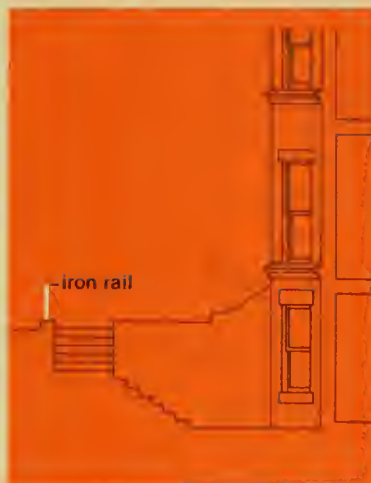
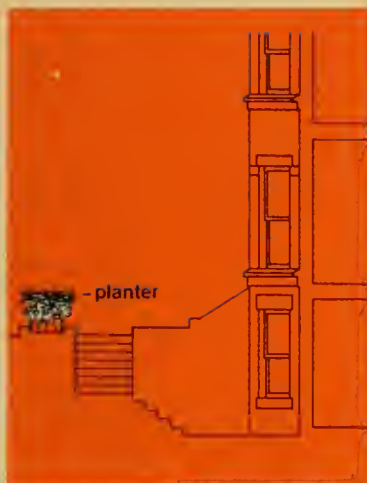


Entrances: first floor conversions to shops

BOYLSTON STREET: not applicable.

MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE: allowed according to Newbury Street guidelines.

NEWBURY STREET: Access to a first floor shop should be from the original building entrance lobby. New separate exterior entrances will generally be discouraged. Access to a basement shop may be from a depressed yard. See "Yard Depressions"



Yard Depressions

BOYLSTON STREET: not generally allowed.

MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE: not generally allowed.

NEWBURY STREET: allowed subject to the following provisions: In reviewing proposals for depressed yard areas as entrances to lower-level shops, the Commission will take into consideration the size of the lot and the overall appearance of the block. In blocks with few depressed yards, a minimum amount of excavation is generally preferred. Access to the

depressed area should be from the original entrance walkway, wherever possible, in order to maintain the rhythm of walkways and yards. Planting and/or fencing should be maintained along the entire street frontage of the depressed area, and landscaping is encouraged. Retaining walls should be masonry compatible in color with the existing building masonry. Excavations of front



yards for basement conversions are discouraged between Hereford Street and Massachusetts Avenue.

Entrance Lighting

Building entrances should be attractively lighted. Concealed-source down-lighting is recommended.

Fire Escapes

While appropriately designed fire balconies may be approved in certain cases, diagonal-stair-type fire escapes are generally not allowed.



Awnings and Entrance Canopies

Allowed if well maintained and made of fabric-like materials (e.g., canvas). Shapes and locations should relate to facade openings in order not to obscure architectural details. Individual awnings for each window are preferred. Awnings and canopies for basement entrances are discouraged. No awning or canopy may extend beyond the street lot line.



Marquees

May be retained where existing. Compatible marquees will be approved only for new buildings or certain renovations where their utility to the public's use of the building can be demonstrated.



Shop Windows: basement and first floor conversions of dwellings to shops

BOYLSTON STREET: not applicable.

MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE: allowed according to Newbury Street guidelines.

NEWBURY STREET: It is intended that the original rhythm of bays, entrances, fenestration, and decorative elements be maintained.

Flat facade: The first floor windows may be increased in height. Basement windows may be enlarged, but they should align with, and in no



case exceed the size of the first floor windows. Basement walls should be masonry to match existing stonework as closely as possible. Glass should be mounted in the plane of the original glass.

Projecting masonry bays: A projecting bay used for display of merchandise may be replaced on the first floor and/or basement levels by a predominantly glass bay subject to the following conditions: The plan of the new bay must conform to the plan



of the original bay as closely as possible; supporting columns replacing existing masonry should be of a large enough cross section to appear visually to support the masonry above.

Existing storefronts

Remodeling of existing storefronts is allowed provided that: the remodeling is compatible with the overall architectural character of the building; existing major architectural features are given recognition; the existing architectural detailing within the storefront area is retained as much as possible. In such remodelings, good contemporary commercial design is encouraged.





Masonry: painting and cleaning

It is the intent of these guidelines that the original colors used in the District be restored unless it can be demonstrated that an original color was incompatible with the others in the vicinity at the time of construction. The painting of previously unpainted brick and stone masonry is discouraged. The removal of accumulated dirt and paint with nondamaging methods is

encouraged. Sandblasting is not generally acceptable as a cleaning technique. All color changes require the approval of the Commission. (For further guidelines on the care of masonry, see BACK BAY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT: GUIDELINES FOR EXTERIOR REHABILITATION AND RESTORATION, pages 15-16.)



Painting: doors, windows, and trim

All changes in color should conform to the Commission's guidelines (see Appendix). Existing doors, windows, and trim may be repainted in existing colors. In a case of an incompatible existing color or shade, however, a change to one within the guidelines is strongly recommended. New metal frames and other



metal components should be prefinished in a dark color approximating the approved trim color used elsewhere on the building. Finishes should be matte or semigloss.

YARDS





Fences

Existing compatible fences and stone curbing around planted areas should be retained. Where these are missing and new fences are needed, fences should be durable so as to be able to withstand normal abuse. Fences should be largely transparent, with dimensions and spacing of posts and rails similar to those of original fences typical elsewhere in the District. In all cases, the design should be compatible with the nature of the materials selected. Among



the types of fence which are generally not considered appropriate are: concrete block, chain link, and most wood. Color should be of a dark value, such as black or a darker version of approved trim color. Light colors are discouraged.

Lighting

Inconspicuous low-height lighting of planting and paved areas is recommended, particularly where it will contribute to the safety of residents and visitors. All lighting should be from concealed sources. Within a block, general flood lighting of a small-scale building is usually not allowable.



Paving

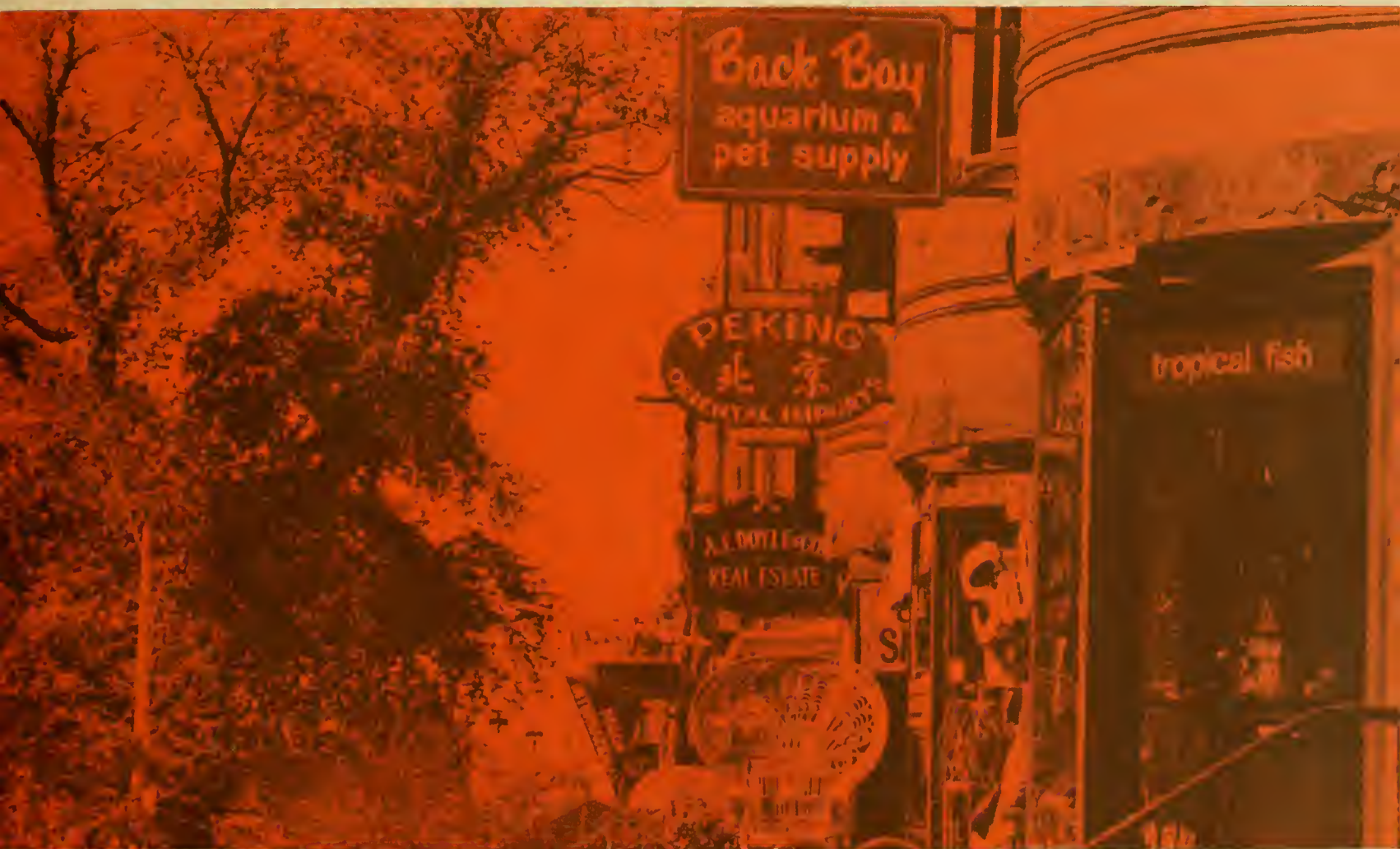
For walkways and other pedestrian use areas, the Commission encourages the use of paving materials and patterns characteristic of the period when the structure on the property was constructed. For most lots, red brick pavers are recommended, but smooth dressed stone and rough surfaced tile pavers may also be appropriate. Materials that are discouraged include: blacktop paving, light-colored square concrete pavers, gravel, outdoor carpeting, and artificial grass.



Planting

In the residential sections of the District, as much planting as possible should be preserved and maintained. Grass and a wide variety of trees, ornamental trees, flowering shrubs, ground covers, and flowering plants are appropriate and recommended plant materials. Light-colored gravel, wood chips, or marble chips in planted areas are discouraged. For paved areas, boxes of plant materials are recommended as borders, particularly along the street lot lines on Newbury Street.

SIGNS





Signs

The design of signs within the District must be approached with care. Great importance is placed on the relationship of a sign to the facade on which it is located. A sign must be designed for careful integration with the architectural features. Its size and proportions must relate to the fenestration and detailing of the building.



The Commission expects that signs which are allowable under these guidelines and are visible from both the street and the sidewalk will satisfy the legitimate needs of commerce without visual clutter and without interference with the views of buildings and other signs.

For further information, see the Boston Sign Code, which is published by the Boston Redevelopment Authority with illustrations and is included as Article 11 of the Boston Zoning Code. All proposals for new or revised signs within the Back Bay



Architectural District must be submitted to the Commission for review and approval. The Commission may recommend exceptions to the code or may impose additional restrictions as indicated in these guidelines. No free-standing or portable signs will generally be allowed except as specified below. The replacement of existing free-standing signs is discouraged.

BOYLSTON STREET AND MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE: Particular attention will be focused on the location of signs relative to architectural detail. The size and design of signs on side street frontages should be reviewed to minimize the impact on the adjacent residential streets.

NEWBURY STREET: Though zoned as a business district, this part of the Architectural District, because of its residential character, will be more restricted in allowable signage. However, because of the particular problems of



the many basement shops in the area, the Commission may allow low freestanding signs in accordance with these guidelines when no other appropriate solution is feasible. In accordance with the Boston Sign Code, the maximum total area for all signs on a building on this street is two feet multiplied by the width of the shop frontage measured in feet. Basement and first floor shops located in the same building

must share this total sign allotment; individual tenants must negotiate with each other and their landlord. Signs which obscure significant architectural detail are generally not approved. The use of raised letters applied directly to the building face is encouraged. The following signs can usually be used:

Freestanding Showcases

Freestanding showcases are not encouraged, but may be permitted if outside heavy pedestrian traffic areas and of demonstrated benefit. They will generally not be permitted along Boylston



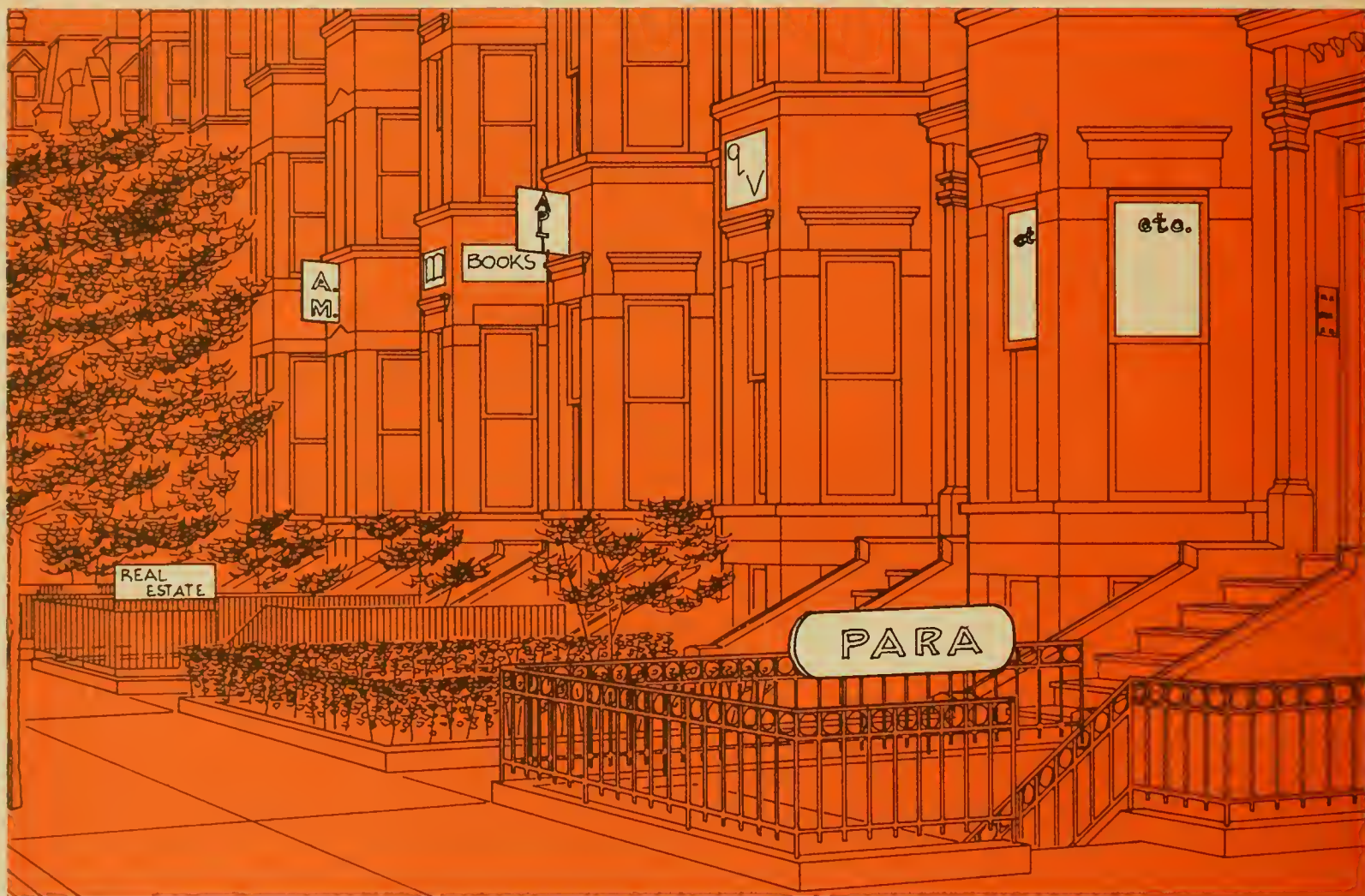
Street and Massachusetts Avenue. A showcase should not be over 3 feet 6 inches high above grade of sidewalk or over 4 feet long. Glass should be limited to 6 square feet in area and should be as nearly level as drainage will permit. The design should integrate well with its architectural surroundings.

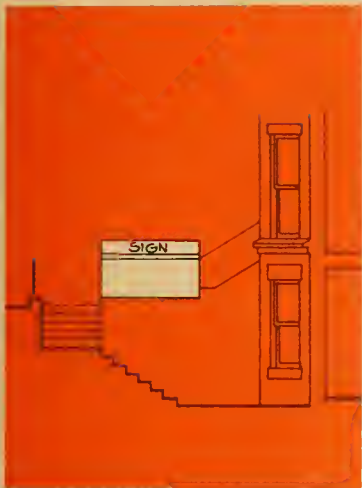
Applied

Signs applied to building face: area limited as above; may be placed no higher than the



sill of the second floor windows. Projecting signs placed at a right angle to the building face generally are limited to 6 square feet, with a 4-foot maximum projection from the building and placement no higher than the sill of the second floor windows.





Lettering

Light-colored letters no more than 6 inches high on a dark background are preferred. No more than two typefaces will generally be allowed. Product trademarks are discouraged.

Freestanding

Low horizontal freestanding sign: usually allowed only to identify businesses located below grade; can be placed at a right angle to the street lot line along the edge of the entrance walkway, with a maximum area of 6 square feet and the top of the sign a



maximum of 4 feet 6 inches above the sidewalk grade. A horizontal format is preferred. Usually only one such sign will be allowed per building, although a sign may be divided to advertise two businesses. Placement on or above a fence or planting is encouraged.



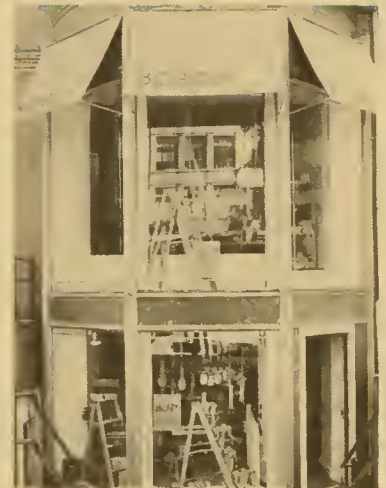
Banners and Flags

Banners and flags are allowed provided each does not exceed 24 square feet in area and the area is included in the total allowed sign area, unless purely graphic or patriotic in content.

Lighting

BOYLSTON STREET AND MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE: back-lighting of signs is discouraged, but may be allowed if only letters are back-lighted.

Newbury Street: back-lighting is usually not permitted. Shielded incandescent lights attached to the top of a sign are encouraged.



Signs on Canopies and Awnings

Signs on canopies and awnings are allowed provided their total area is included in the total allowed sign area and their lettering is consistent in style and color with other building signs.

APPROVED COLORS

Color samples should be submitted to the Executive Secretary of the Commission for approval before work is begun. Generally, the Commission prefers that, in repainting, the original colors be used when such information exists.

DOORS

Original “old” doors should be restored to deep-toned wood finishes, but matte black and muted browns, greens, greys, and ochre paint colors are acceptable alternatives.

WALLS and FRONT STEPS

Repainting should maintain the general color of the natural masonry and must not be completed in bright or unusual colors.

AWNINGS and CANOPIES

Suggested canvas colors include buff-brown, light grey, ochre, brick red, grey-green, and medium blue.

MARQUEES

Anodized bronze, black, or dark-colored metal.

WINDOW FRAMES and SASH

Matte black, medium greys, grey-browns, and deep reds are most appropriate for wooden window frames in brownstone or brownstone-trimmed buildings, while deep shades of grey, brown, and green as well as matte black should be used with red brick. Window frames within light-colored stone construction may be painted beige, dove grey, deep blue, forest green, or matte black.

ORIELS

Subdued colors like soft browns, bronze greens, medium greys, and matte black.

STORM WINDOWS

Should closely match trim color.

SHUTTERS

Matte black or other dark color.

IRON WORK (fences, handrails, balconies, fire escapes)

Black, or other dark color.

CORNICES

Painted the color of the original masonry or masonry trim.

DORMER WINDOWS

To match existing windows.

GUTTERS and DOWNSPOUTS

Bronze green, black, or other dark colors.

UTILITY EQUIPMENT

Dark or grey color.

SIGNS

Colors should generally be limited to three, including black and white.

Source: Brochure, BACK BAY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT – GUIDELINES FOR EXTERIOR REHABILITATION AND RESTORATION, available (\$2.50) from the office of the Commission.

BACK BAY ARCHITECTURAL COMMISSION

City Hall – Ninth Floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02201

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